

# Lake Apopka Fisheries Status



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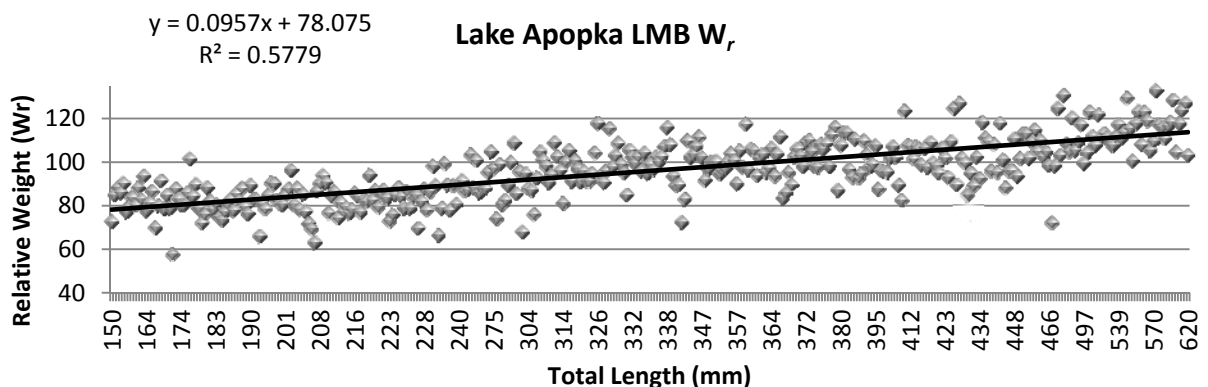
When asked about fishing or fish in Lake Apopka, many people might answer “There are no fish worth catching in the lake”, or “I would never eat any fish from that lake!”. The facts are that Lake Apopka has a moderate population of sportfish (bass, crappie, bluegill and redear, hybrid striped bass) that may be safely consumed, as is the case for the other lakes of the Ocklawaha chain. For full advisories, contact the FL Dept. of Health at: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/floridafishadvice/2011%20Advisories.pdf> . Only the brown bullhead catfish is restricted for consumption.

In our fall electrofishing samples (Table 1), we found that the shoreline community is dominated by bluegill (24%, by weight of the entire sample) and largemouth bass (23%, by weight). Threadfin shad - a native fish and good food for bass, crappie and hybrid striped bass - is the most common fish (57% of the sample, by number), followed by bluegill (23%). We typically collect 25 or more species of fish in our electrofishing samples in Lake Apopka (range of 21 to 27 species in our samples since 2006). This is about average for the lakes of the Ocklawaha chain.

During the spring, we sample Lake Apopka specifically for largemouth bass. As one of the top predators in the lake, the status of the largemouth bass (in terms of the average fish weight and how many fish we find in our samples) gives us insight into the health of the entire fish community. We collected 385 bass ranging from 4 to 24 inches in length in spring 2011 samples. When we examined bass weights, we found the relative weight of bass increased with length (Figure 1). In Lake Apopka, the small bass had a lower relative weight (they are still fine), while bass of harvestable size (14 inches or 356 mm) were above the ideal relative weight value of 100, indicating they had plenty of food available to them.

Angler surveys conducted from January to April 2010 showed little fishing effort on Lake Apopka. Of course, the lake level has been quite low in the past two years as a result of ongoing drought, which makes launching a boat from the two primary ramps at Winter Garden and Magnolia Park difficult. We measured only 0.02 hours per acre, per 100 days for crappie, where lakes Dora and Beauclair had 4 hours per acre in the same year. But bass fishing can be worth the extra effort to get to Lake Apopka. Several local bass tournaments have been won over the last few years by anglers who made the trip to Lake Apopka to fish.

Figure 1. The relative weights ( $W_r$ ) of largemouth bass from Lake Apopka in spring 2011. A relative weight value of 100 is average compared to a standard weight.



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**Table 1 - List of fish species captured in Lake Apopka shoreline sampling during fall 2010. Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) in electrofishing samples is in terms of fish caught per minute or grams of fish caught per minute.**

Lake Apopka

N= 25

Sample Period (Month,Yr):

September-October 2010

Species (Common Name)	CPUE Number						CPUE Weight						% Composition	
	Fish/min	SE	SD	CV	Min	Max	g/min	SE	SD	CV	Min	Max	Number	Weight
blue tilapia	0.02	0.01	0.05	250	0.00	0.20	16.08	9.21	46.06	286	0.00	196.50	0.11%	2.03%
black crappie	0.22	0.04	0.22	98	0.00	0.60	32.67	7.06	35.32	108	0.00	113.80	1.27%	4.13%
bluegill	4.03	0.57	2.85	71	0.00	10.40	192.68	32.31	161.53	84	0.00	506.02	22.88%	24.34%
bowfin	0.01	0.01	0.03	276	0.00	0.10	38.12	24.70	123.48	324	0.00	491.00	0.07%	4.82%
brown bullhead	0.63	0.17	0.87	139	0.00	4.00	120.47	34.33	171.65	142	0.00	776.90	3.56%	15.22%
dollar sunfish	0.00	0.00	0.02	500	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.02	500	0.00	0.11	0.02%	<0.01%
Florida gar	0.12	0.03	0.15	129	0.00	0.60	114.43	32.70	163.50	143	0.00	747.10	0.66%	14.46%
gizzard shad	0.40	0.11	0.54	135	0.00	2.70	31.55	5.52	27.61	87	0.00	91.85	2.27%	3.99%
golden shiner	0.26	0.05	0.27	101	0.00	0.90	3.21	0.73	3.67	114	0.00	13.20	1.50%	0.41%
inland silverside	0.06	0.02	0.12	198	0.00	0.50	0.04	0.02	0.10	275	0.00	0.43	0.34%	<0.01%
lake chubsucker	0.00	0.00	0.02	500	0.00	0.10	0.22	0.22	1.10	500	0.00	5.50	0.02%	0.03%
longnose gar	0.02	0.01	0.06	323	0.00	0.30	6.75	4.03	20.13	298	0.00	82.80	0.11%	0.85%
largemouth bass	0.50	0.10	0.52	104	0.00	2.30	183.02	34.56	172.82	94	0.00	581.90	2.84%	23.12%
Eastern mosquitofish	0.40	0.21	1.04	258	0.00	5.20	0.08	0.03	0.16	201	0.00	0.73	2.29%	0.01%
redbreast sunfish	0.02	0.01	0.06	323	0.00	0.30	0.49	0.32	1.62	329	0.00	7.60	0.11%	0.06%
reardear sunfish	0.34	0.06	0.28	84	0.00	1.00	25.39	8.11	40.55	160	0.00	195.60	1.93%	3.21%
sailfin molly	0.01	0.01	0.03	346	0.00	0.10	0.01	0.00	0.02	408	0.00	0.12	0.05%	<0.01%
Seminole killifish	0.07	0.02	0.11	147	0.00	0.40	0.88	0.28	1.38	157	0.00	5.80	0.41%	0.11%
spotted sunfish	0.20	0.18	0.90	441	0.00	4.50	0.07	0.07	0.34	466	0.00	1.68	1.16%	<0.01%
swamp darter	0.01	0.01	0.03	346	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.01	346	0.00	0.05	0.05%	<0.01%
taillight shiner	0.05	0.04	0.18	352	0.00	0.90	0.04	0.03	0.14	367	0.00	0.70	0.30%	<0.01%
threadfin shad	10.10	3.69	18.45	183	0.20	90.20	10.46	2.94	14.69	140	0.40	66.80	57.31%	1.32%
warmouth	0.08	0.02	0.11	148	0.00	0.40	2.47	0.89	4.44	179	0.00	15.10	0.43%	0.31%
white catfish	0.02	0.01	0.05	250	0.00	0.20	6.84	4.71	23.53	344	0.00	115.90	0.11%	0.86%
yellow bullhead	0.04	0.01	0.06	158	0.00	0.20	5.51	2.02	10.12	184	0.00	31.60	0.20%	0.70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.62</b>	<b>3.74</b>	<b>18.70</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>4.70</b>	<b>99.40</b>	<b>791.48</b>	<b>85.78</b>	<b>428.90</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>93.54</b>	<b>1997.10</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>